



The Beacon



By and for emergency responders

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS AND WMD PREPAREDNESS

The American Red Cross, paralleling in many ways its involvement with natural disasters, has been actively engaged for many years with issues surrounding weapons of mass destruction – and more broadly, nuclear, biological, and chemical incidents whether accidentally or deliberately caused. In the last year alone, we have responded with other agencies to over 30 incidents and exercises.

A national-level American Red Cross workgroup is formulating policies and procedures, working closely with the NDPO to assure consistency and integration. At the local level, Red Cross chapters throughout the country have increasingly focused their attention on ways in which the Red Cross can meaningfully contribute to the preparedness and response planning of local and state emergency management officials.

One area of involvement for the American Red Cross in WMD preparedness is “Mass Care.” It is widely recognized that the potential exists for significant sheltering and feeding. The Red Cross can build on its experience and expertise in shelter selection and shelter management, working closely with HHS.

The American Red Cross also has developed a large cadre of specially-trained licensed mental health professionals experienced in dealing with crisis and disaster management. This, too, is a field of expertise which can be potentially molded into HHS programs and planning at the state and local levels.

A recent proposed major grant to the Red Cross focuses on training Red Cross personnel across the country with regard to NBC and WMD incidents. With the Red Cross’ large network of disaster-trained staff, the organization potentially has a significant resource available to assist at the time of an incident.

Communicating with the general public – both communities and families – is another area in which the American Red Cross has substantial experience. With everything from brochures to CD ROMs, the ability to create materials which can help to educate and prepare communities, neighborhoods, and families have been developed.

The Red Cross also anticipates a role as a part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Federal Response Plan in its role as the Emergency Support Function for Mass Care. Under FEMA's responsibility for Consequence Management, the Red Cross will be working closely with all agencies that have ESF responsibilities.

All Red Cross resources are potentially available to state and local emergency managers. All within the emergency management field also know that dialogue and joint planning is essential. Often, at all levels, those in one agency make assumptions about what another agency will do without the benefit of advance communication. The most important commitment of the American Red Cross is that it will seek out every possible opportunity to engage in that kind of joint planning at the national, state, and local levels. In its active partnerships with other agencies and in its responses as an independent agency to the requests of the people served, the Red Cross recognizes that it is essential that its efforts with regard to NBC and WMD be effectively coordinated.

CREATING A DISASTER PLAN

If a disaster strikes, are you ready to save your business and the lives of your employees? Here is expert advice on how to start the planning process.

by Michael J. Fagel, Ph D

All too frequently, we hear of emergency and disaster situations happening throughout the U.S. In a recent two-week time period, a chemical spill required an evacuation of a Chicago suburb, massive flooding occurred in the Rockies, an aircraft crashed, and a terrorist attack was thwarted on an East Coast metropolitan mass transit system.

As a safety manager at an industrial facility, you must be prepared to move efficiently and safely to prevent or mitigate catastrophic events that may occur at your site. No area of the country is immune, and no industry or type of occupancy is safe from these type of events. As with all safety processes, commitment on the part of management and employees to emergency and disaster planning is essential for its success. Frequently, managers argue that they "can't afford the overtime right now," but the time it takes to prepare a plan and practice it are valuable investments in the facility's ability to recover after an emergency.

Once you have that commitment level, make sure all participants, including employees, visitors and contractors, understand that the commitment is a true reflection of the spirit of the organization. Planning must also involve the emergency response agencies that will be a part of your overall program. Failing to actively communicate with all involved almost certainly will cause breakdowns when a disaster occurs.

As you begin the process, coordinate ideas within departments and divisions inside the facility. At this point, identify who is going to be the contact person inside each business unit or department. Then determine which employees will participate in emergency response. Not only will they be involved in the planning process, but you will need to have them assist you in getting an accurate head count of who is (and isn't) accounted for after an evacuation or fire event.

Take stock of the most important asset you have -- your people. Find out what skills and abilities the contact person or response team members have that can be used during the operation and recovery process.

Some may be trained in first aid and CPR. Others may have mechanical or other trade skills. Some may have had firsthand experience with other emergency situations in their personal or military backgrounds.

Making the Plan Yours

Disasters and site emergencies take many shapes. They may involve natural disasters such as tornadoes or floods, workplace violence, product recall, incapacitation of key staff or other nonweather or physical plant situations.

Emergency action plans, as a result, also take many shapes and sizes. Take the simplest approach to keep the process manageable, but make sure the plan reflects your needs. Often, sites want to take a plan from some other organization, change a few names and issue the plan as theirs. Using a "fill in the blanks" plan may lead to a false sense of security, and probably won't work.

Start at the beginning and work your way to the conclusion. What is the purpose of the plan, and why are you preparing it? Is it in response to the federal OSHA standard 1910.38(a) regarding emergency action plans? Or is it to comply with federal EPA and emergency planning regulations? Some local jurisdictions also have their own rules and ordinances. While preparing the plan to meet regulatory obligations is an important component, the plan's fundamental purpose should be to protect employees, visitors, property and the community.

During plan development, identify departments and internal units that are critical components of the operation, and of the disaster and emergency recovery process. These may include upper management, safety, security, marketing/sales, facilities management, finance and accounting. Add to this list as your plan requires.

Some facilities may have processes that require an immediate and total site evacuation. In other situations, your plan may require keeping some critical operations on-line to prevent an even more catastrophic event.

Accountability

In emergency situations, we often lose sight of the large numbers of people that are moving in and around the operation. Include in your plan a secure method to identify authorized staff and also to take an accurate head count of employees, visitors and contractors as they evacuate a particular area. Some facilities break up the site into zones, with employees (often called floor wardens or safety monitors) assigned emergency responsibilities in each zone. Remember that it is very dangerous to commit extra resources to look for people that have already gotten out safely.

Access control is needed during the response and recovery phases of a disaster event. Authorized organizational staff must have proper credentials to enter the area. Some key members may have responsibilities that require access through police and fire control points. In today's age of computers and laser printers, resourceful, unauthorized people may try to get into the scene, often with forged credentials.

It is difficult to control scenes in the opening hours of an event. During the security operations at the Oklahoma City bombing, I waited for several hours to get the proper clearance badges to enter the controlled zones. During the event, you may have to take precautions to protect the scene, in cooperation with the local emergency officials. The event may trigger visits from various regulatory agencies to the scene. Remember, they are conducting their investigations in accordance with rules and regulations that they are obligated to carry out. Do not hamper them in their official duties. You may need to include the legal counsel for your site in the planning process, so that they may help mitigate the effects of the event in accordance with the organization's management.

Public Information

Only an authorized spokesperson should speak for the site. Have someone inside your organization participate in disaster drills and be able to represent the organization to the public, the media, and the regulatory agencies. Keep your site staff involved in the mitigation of the event concentrated on the recovery, while allowing your public relations staffer to keep the outside world informed.

Other Elements

Some other items to consider include the medical and first aid duties at the site. Prepare a first aid response as if the local emergency medical services were unable to reach your site in their normal response time. Pattern of normal service may be disrupted due to an area-wide event, or mass casualties that overwhelm the local emergency health care providers. You may need to enlist the aid of local industrial or community health services to provide nursing support services on the scene. Tetanus injections (per local medical protocol) as well as wellness and stress issues must be considered during any prolonged operation.

Community mental health services may also be useful to help with the stress caused by a critical incident. The emergency may require specific medical necessities on hand, such as unique antidotes for a specific toxin that may be present in your facility or for the byproduct of a fire with certain chemical compounds. Plan this in advance so that if unique supplies and training are required, valuable time is not wasted while people need treatment.

Make sure you have methods to identify or mark the preferred exit routes during an emergency and educate all employees about them. If your staff sees these routes every day, it will provide valuable reinforcement. Identification signs, maps and emergency egress lighting are mandatory elements for identifying escape routes.

Take a case-by-case approach to each potential disaster or type of emergency and work with the team to prepare a cohesive, appropriate response. Are there areas inside the facility that are to be used for shelter during high winds? Contact the engineering department to help identify what areas of the building are most suitable for sheltering, then clearly mark them as shelters. Response to a fire may require a unique reaction, such as shutting down a volatile process to prevent a further fire or explosion.

Proper training and education is vital to the success of the process. Drills, table top exercises and orientation all help. The orientation process should include the disaster plans, and employees' roles and responsibilities in them. Annual retraining should cover any job-specific changes that may have occurred.

Methods for notifying employees include two-way radio, building alarm systems, horns, sirens, strobe lights and paging systems. You must insure that the system will operate in the event of a power or system failure, or have an alternative backup to effectively notify employees, visitors and contractors of the emergency. Some alternatives might be battery-powered bull horns, or even aerosol portable boat horns. Three blasts of the horn might be just the emergency action signal you need to alert employees for an evacuation. Do not make assumptions that everyone will understand the signal, or the appropriate response. Be sure to train employees and managers on what is required of them.

Communications

Part of your planning should be to identify and arrange alternative communications tools. Cellular phones with extra charged batteries are good backups to the land-based telephone system. Pagers are also useful, but they still need telephone system access to operate. Two-way connected to an off-site monitoring location may be your only way to communicate, as telephone and cellular equipment may not be functional. Fax machines, e-mail and amateur radios may also be incorporated into your plan.

Public relations is often overlooked in response planning. Product recalls are not thought of as a disaster, but they can have far-reaching effects on the organization or community. Have trained individuals ready to respond to the media and keep reporters informed about the event. Remember, your customers may be getting their first information about an event from a satellite broadcast of late-breaking news. A prepared statement can help the media and customers be informed about the facts.

Outside Agencies

During the planning phase, involve the public and private emergency response agencies. Police, fire, rescue, ambulance and emergency management organizations have a vested interest in your facility. Invite these organizations to look at and "preplan" your site.

Show them where critical items are, such as chemical storage, materials that should not come into contact with water, utility shutoff, and what processes not to shut off. Part of your planning process is to identify those items. The hours that you invest in preplanning, training and education may very well save your life, the lives of countless others, and your facility.

Like a safety process, emergency planning requires continuous improvement. Programs have a starting and stopping point, while processes are always evolving. Your planning process must be adaptable, user-friendly and appropriate to your facility. Take the time to begin your planning process today, and take that important first step in emergency preparedness.

Team Effort

Emergency planning is best looked at as a team effort.

T Training...is best done by a team that is connected to the entire process. Training should be provided from the highest level of management to the functional elements that will actually practice and carry out the plan.

E Emergency (Education)...is a parallel duty to training the team. Do continual updates to the plan and educate the participants as their respective roles and responsibilities.

A Action...is best undertaken after proper training and education have taken place. The action may be emergency preparedness drills, table top exercises to practice the plan, or having all levels of the team review and update the plan's basis components to insure their applicability.

M Mitigation...involves lessening the effects of the emergency event and minimizing the potential for further damage.

Mike Fagel is the corporate safety director for Aurora Packing Co., the first red meat facility in OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). A 25-year veteran of the North Aurora Fire Department, he also serves as the director of the North Aurora Emergency Management Agency. Fagel recently joined the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an on-call safety cadre team specialist for disaster response. He holds numerous certifications, and a Ph.D. in Occupational Safety.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who are the NDPO's "Stakeholders?"

The NDPO's Stakeholders are members of the trained emergency response community. They include state and local police officers, firefighters, HAZMAT personnel, dispatchers, paramedics, Emergency Management Service technicians, state and local emergency management specialists, and members of the medical community.

In August, 1998, the Stakeholders met with the Attorney General and made the recommendation to establish a single federal coordinating office for the many federal programs providing domestic preparedness assistance. This recommendation resulted in the creation of the NDPO.

While the term "Stakeholder" is used to describe the trained emergency response community, it is also true that all citizens have a "stake" in response planning. From the security department of a utility company to an innocent bystander on the street anyone could become a "first responder" to a terrorist use of a WMD. Education and awareness information can mean the difference between life and death.

2. Who contributes to The Beacon, and can I submit an article or item of information?

The Beacon staff receives input and articles from our federal partners, members of the academic community, and state and local emergency responders. Anyone in the WMD preparedness arena can submit information to be published in the newsletter. *The Beacon* is a forum for the emergency response community to make announcements, exchange information, and provide the latest information on training, equipment, and exercises.

3. What happened to the www.ndpo.com site on the Internet? Where is the NDPO's web page located?

The www.ndpo.com web site was a temporary address that was originally created to provide a fast NDPO presence on the World Wide Web. The NDPO web site is currently located on the FBI's Homepage at www.fbi.gov. When you get to the FBI's page, click on the "Programs and Organizational Initiatives" on the left menu, then click on the NDPO hypertext. The NDPO staff is currently working on establishing a www.ndpo.gov address.

In the News . . .

U.S. WMD PREPAREDNESS QUESTIONED

On July 9th, *The Washington Post* reported that the Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of WMD, headed by former CIA Director John Deutch, cited the U.S. unprepared to prevent or cope with a chemical, biological, or nuclear attack. In response to their findings, the commission recommended the appointment of a national director to coordinate the nation's defense against WMD.

The commission's report also indicated that at least a dozen terrorist groups have expressed an interest in or actively sought chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, and there is an urgent need for improved intelligence about foreign plants that produce WMD.

The report stated that the government's efforts, both to prevent the spread of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and to cope with the possible use of WMD in a terrorist attack, are disorganized.

The commission envisions the new director for combating proliferation would sit on the National Security Council and chair a group of senior officials who would coordinate policy.

Editor's note: This commission's report addresses proliferation issues and the possibility that foreign powers may be manufacturing WMD that terrorists could use against the U.S. The commission's report did not address the government's current initiatives in preparedness planning, including the establishment of the NDPO or the presence of the National Coordinator, Richard Clarke, who currently sits on the NSC. The report also did not address the efforts of Congress in preparing the country against terrorist attacks involving WMD regardless of where they were manufactured.

NEW ORLEANS PREPARES FOR CHEMICAL ATTACK

Louisiana emergency officials were recently put to the test during a mock chemical attack, entitled "Measured Response." The exercise took place at Tad Gormley Stadium in New Orleans, with Boy Scouts serving as "victims." The Scouts, who received service hours for participating, acted out symptoms that were scripted on cards hung around

their necks. The symptoms were clues for emergency responders, who did not know what was happening. The responders received a frantic 911 call, and it was up to them to decide how to handle the situation. Event officials also incorporated a mock secondary explosive device into the drill.

A real-life circumstance emerged during the exercise when a bus accident took away the attention of dozens of ambulances. The accident enabled first responders an unexpected opportunity to see what other problems could arise during a disaster.

“Measured Response” was developed by the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM). SBCCOM has administered the exercise in 13 cities across the U.S.

SENATE RESTRICTS ACCESS TO CHEMICAL DATABASE

The Senate unanimously passed a compromise version of a bill that would restrict public access to information about the risks of chemical accidents. The measure would prohibit, for one year, disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act of any information that describes what could happen if toxic chemicals were accidentally released into the environment.

The data is contained in reports that the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) requires some manufacturers that use toxic chemicals to submit, outlining the consequences of an explosion or other disaster. The EPA is keeping the information in an electronic database, and federal law enforcement officials fear that opening the database to the public would provide terrorists with too much information about potential targets.

NEVADA OFFICIALS SEEK TOUGHER PROTECTIONS AGAINST NUCLEAR WASTE TERRORISM

Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn and Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa recently filed a petition with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) asking that the existing regulations governing the security and safety of spent nuclear fuel transportation be reexamined and strengthened. The petition seeks to have the NRC reevaluate its requirements for safeguarding spent fuel shipments in light of the changing nature of threats involving domestic terrorism and sabotage, including the greater accessibility of new and powerful armor piercing weapons.

The NRC has the responsibility to certify that shipping containers and other elements of the transportation system used to ship spent nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste on highways and railroads can protect the public and environment from the evolving threat of attacks by terrorists.

WHAT’S NEW AT THE NDPO

On July 15th, the NDPO hosted the second meeting regarding the establishment of the Federal Leadership Advisory Group (FLAG). The meeting, held at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C., enabled the NDPO staff to update federal representatives on organizational issues, initiatives, and the State and Local

Advisory Group. The meeting also provided a forum for the representatives to discuss the FLAG mission/charter and the group's composition and leadership.

In attendance were representatives from the Department of Justice, National Guard Bureau, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Federal Emergency Management Agency. Also in attendance were representatives from the American Red Cross.

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

This month's featured web site is the Stimson Center's Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project page located at www.stimson.org/cwc/index.html. The site serves as a clearinghouse of information, research, and publications on chemical and biological weapons and arms control efforts.

The page is organized into a What's New area, Chemical Weapons Issues, Biological Weapons Issues, Chem/Bio Weapons Arms Control Efforts, Chem/Bio Terrorism, and Publications. The Chemical and Biological Weapons Issues page provides in-depth historical aspects about each weapon. There are also links describing physical and medical characteristics of Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents. Throughout the site you will be able to find a wide variety of testimony, legislation, and articles that relate to Chem/Bio weapons. The Stimson Publications List contains a vast catalog of papers, books, reports, handbooks, and conference reports on many subjects involving chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare and arms control. In order to read or download some of the publications, you will need an Adobe Acrobat reader, which you can download free on the Internet (there is an Adobe hyperlink on the Publication List page).

The Stimson Center's Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project is an excellent place to begin research on Chem/Bio weapons and their effects. You can also gather valuable information on legislation and Congressional activity regarding Chem/Bio nonproliferation.

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